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ABSTRACT

It is the undeniable responsibility of the community college to provide educational opportunities for all citizens in a community, including culturally different adults. In designing relevant outreach center programs for culturally different adults, it is of utmost importance to determine the needs of the groups, to directly involve participants in the process, to explore their perceptions of reality, and to examine biases held by the dominant society. The logical starting point for program planning involves determining the group characteristics, which will vary from one group to another. The social-psychological characteristics of culturally different groups usually include low self-esteem, a high degree of dependency on others, and difficulties in communicating with the dominant society. The Martin Luther King Adult Education Center of Kankakee Community College, Kankakee, Illinois is a model outreach center that provides physical/socioeconomic/social-psychological support through its "success-oriented" program. Effectiveness of an outreach center will depend ultimately on the quality and dedication of the teaching/counseling/administrative staff, and on preservice and inservice training, which are vital teacher training components. Moreover, outreach centers need to coordinate their efforts with community libraries and learning centers in order to serve the needs of culturally different adults. (EA)

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Programs for Culturally Different Adults: The Potential of Outreach Centers

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In keeping with the theme "Reaching the Disadvantaged through C.E.T.A.," I have agreed to focus my remarks on the potential of outreach centers, whose function is to provide programs for culturally different adults. Let me explain, at the outset, that I prefer this term to the monolithic term "disadvantaged adults." In my opinion, "culturally different" better expresses the tremendous diversity in a population that is set aside from the dominant society for reasons associated with race, nationality, education, occupation, income, and so on. The basic question that you might ask, as members of a community college staff, is this: Why should a college decentralize its operation by establishing a satellite center to serve one segment of the community? First and foremost in the decision-making process at the college are the concerns which Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox have identified in their recent book Last Gamble on Education. Outreach centers mean:

> (1) higher per-student cost; (2) problems of co-ordination, communication, and logistics; (3) poor facilities; (4) lack of instructional equipment and limited choice of materials; (5) lack of means of grouping students by achievement levels; and (6) difficulty in providing counselling services.[1]

These disadvantages which are primarily of an administrative nature, could become insurmountable barriers to an institution concerned with accountability based on the utilization of a centralized campus.

Nevertheless, it is the undeniable responsibility of the community college to provide educational opportunities for all citizens in a community, not just for the dominant middle-class society which equates the centralized campus with greater opportunities and success. The culturally different adults to whom I have referred entertain quite different perceptions of reality and, hence, quite different needs. I am going to explore these different perceptions of reality with you and the related characteristics of these groups, because they are extremely important for two reasons: for determining the kinds of programs that ought to be designed for outreach centers and for planning the kinds of training that the ABE teachers need. The different perceptions of reality have been researched by Hall, who comments as follows:

> ...people from different cultures not only speak different languages but, what is possibly more important, inhabit different sensory worlds. Selective screening of sensory data admits some things while filtering out others, so that experience as it is perceived through one set of culturally patterned sensory screens is quite different from experience received through another.[2]

Although the diversity of culturally different groups makes it hard to generalize, Anderson and Niemi reported in 1970 that many of them uphold value systems that are clearly at variance with those of the dominant society. Because they see no future that differs significantly from the present, these people tend to be pragmatic; that is, they lean toward "present" orientation and rewards, toward a "live for today" philosophy that pays scant attention to planning for the future. Furthermore, because of discrimination on the part of members of the dominant society, many culturally different groups reject, explicitly or implicitly, its institutional structures in favor of "small personal, kinship, locality or friendship groups."[3]

All these factors must be taken into account when assessing the needs of these people and planning programs to help them. It is also vitally important to involve them in determining their needs and planning their programs. All too often, they are not consulted, but are handed programs which, to them, have little relevance. There are many reasons for this state of affairs. For institutions like many of the Illinois community colleges, state funding has been directed to students enrolled in the academic transfer or career programs, which have well-developed curricula. For the culturally different groups, the lack of funds has often, in the past, given rise to the following situation described by Haggstrom:

> From the point of the poor, most programs extended to them are upside down, serving the affluent society which offers the programs rather than being sensitively related to the continuing action of the poor.[4]

Other difficulties in the program planning process have grown out of biases entertained by the dominant society; for example, a tendency to assume that, in a culturally different group, a member or members who adopt a spokesman's role are authentic representatives or acknowledged leaders of the group. In fact, they may not be. Another bias expresses itself in the belief that culturally

different groups can contribute little of value to program planning. In Alaska, the Indian and Eskimo peoples articulated this approach by a so-called expert as "the three P's of program planning -- pop in, pop out, and pop off." Perhaps the difference between the way some culturally different groups see themselves and the way they are perceived by the dominant society is best illustrated in this comment by a Mississippi black man to Harvard psychiatrist Coles:

> The people who help us, we're grateful to them, but I wish they wouldn't keep telling us how sorry they are for us, how bad we have it, and I wish their eyes wouldn't pop out every time they see we're not crying all day long and running wild or something. The other day a white fellow, he said how wonderful my house is, and how good we get along together, and how impressed he was by it all. I wanted to say, "Don't be giving us that kind of compliment, because it shows on you what you don't know about us." [5]

The different perceptions of reality that I have referred to on the part of culturally different groups bear a close relationship to age, sex, and socio-economic characteristics, that is, education, income, employment, marital status, family size, residence, and health. Anderson and Niemi reported many studies that correlated educational level as a consistently significant variable when related to occupation and income; that is, poorly educated people generally held unskilled or semi-skilled jobs paying low incomes. Similarly, income and education are related to matters of residence, health, family size, and crime.[6] A more recent report (1975) by Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox described the characteristics of students enrolled in ABE programs in six large urban communities. They ranged from teen-age dropouts to retired adults. The data showed that less than two per cent were over the age of sixty. In other words, in those urban populations, the students were younger. Concerning sex, it was reported that women made up 57 per cent of the total enrollments. As for income, about half earned less than $4,000 a year, and fourteen per cent were unemployed. In summary, the profile of the urban ABE student appeared thus:

> ...young to middle age, poor, and employed as unskilled or semi-skilled laborers or service workers. If they speak English as their native language, they are, with exceptions, black -- and more likely to be women and somewhat older. ...Fifteen to 25 per cent are on welfare. Although functionally illiterate, the majority have had nine or more years of formal schooling...[7]

A review of the characteristics of the culturally different groups would not be complete without a brief reference to their social-psychological characteristics. These include low self-esteem, an accompanying lack of self-confidence, a high degree of dependency on others, and difficulties in communicating with the dominant society,because they speak only their "public" language or dialect. While the vocabulary and idioms are functional and effective within their own milieus, this language often places severe limitations on speakers who attempt to communicate with the dominant society.

Now what does all this mean to the community college or school district that hopes to reach these groups? Obviously, in program planning, it is of the utmost importance to determine the <u>needs</u> of the culturally different groups with whom we are dealing. A good place to start (indeed the only place to start) is with their characteristics, which will vary from one group to another. As mentioned earlier, these relate to age, sex, socio-economic factors like education, income, residence, and so on; and to socio-psychological factors like low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and problems of communication. Such data will yield not only statistical information about the groups, but valuable insights into their interests and strengths. Other insights will reveal factors that could cause misunderstandings and inhibit later participation by the groups in program planning and in the classroom. And, here, let me reiterate the absolute necessity of <u>involving</u> them in the process, so that they will feel that the program is truly relevant to their needs. I want to mention here my recent experience as a member of an evaluation team looking at both central ABE facilities and satellite centers in Illinois. We found that two communities (one in a major metropolitan area), only a limited number of the large under-educated black population were attending classes, because they saw those classes as bearing little relationship to their needs for coping skills to help them to function in society.

To turn now to outreach centers, I am sure that the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Adult Education Center at Kankakee was established on the principles I have outlined. A House was selected as an outreach center of Kankakee Community College and it appears to have succeeded in its purposes. The kinds of problems — physical, socio-economic, and social-psychological -- that such centers can overcome are described as follows in an article in Adult Learning:

> (1) lack of transportation, (2) differences in social and academic status with people in other sections of the city, (3) the need for a learning environment that did not recall failure and frustration, (4) the stimulus of "success orientation" in the student's own neighborhood, and (5) the lack of child care facilities.[8]

The King Center illustrates the advantages of community outreach centers, as Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox reported them:

> (1) extension of ABE opportunities to the hardest to reach and most disadvantaged portion of the population; (2) a learning environment enhanced by the social cohesion that results from common membership in the church or other organization; and (3) greater visibility of ABE in the community and broader community support.[9]

Of course, the success or failure of an outreach center will depend ultimately on the quality and dedication of the staff recruited for the teaching and support positions, that is, counselling and administration. By quality staff, I mean the kind of adult educator whom Pearce depicts:

> The teacher's foremost concern must be the adult student, and his effectiveness in this concern must be judged on his ability to help the student to develop and maintain self-confidence. The ideal teacher could be described as people-oriented, more interested in people than things, more interested in individuality than conformity, and more interested in finding solutions than in following rules. He would be considered a mature, integrated personality that had chosen his own role and relationship to society and coveted for everyone else the same privilege.[10]

To these qualities, we might add that the ideal teacher would certainly perceive his own need for special training in order to function effectively in adult basic education. Niemi and Davison developed a model for the analysis of such training. In addition to discussing the basic requirements -- knowledge of the subject matter, the student, the learning process, and the adult education process -- they identified skills and attitudes which an ABE teacher must possess. Foremost

among these attitudes is empathy with students, which goes beyond understanding to identify with their hopes and fears, patience with their problems, and respect for their value systems.[11]

The topflight ABE teacher is rarely born, and must be made. I can hardly over-state to you the great need for the pre-service training of such teachers. As I have tried to show, theirs is an extremely specialized and sensitive task. It cannot be done well by inexperienced people or by teachers whose previous experience has been wholly with elementary or high school students, or with adults belonging to the middle class. Unless our ABE teachers are thoroughly trained, the most carefully designed and generously funded programs will have little chance of success. And, in the training of these teachers, I include the in-service aspect, because they need to keep up to date with new developments, constantly occurring, that relate to individualized instruction, use of the media, the extremely important role of the teacher in counselling, and so on. Some of that training could be accomplished through credit or non-credit offerings by colleges or universities and through workshops, like this one, and conferences. Another approach would utilize television as a delivery system for such programs as the teacher education series, "Basic Education: Teaching The Adult," developed by the Maryland State Department of Education.

So far, our discussion has centered on the needs of culturally different groups, their characteristics, and the call for ABE teachers with special preparation. In approaching the last sub-topic of this presentation -- the relationship between community environment and the delivery system -- I remind you that, later in the program, we will be hearing about two model outreach centers operated through Kankakee Community College. In my work as an adult educator, I have observed a number of such centers, each with its own strengths for meeting the needs of a particular population. For example, in Bethel, Alaska, Kuskokwin Community College is using, in its outreach centers, community sponsors, that is, para-professional ABE teachers, to instruct in their programs.

and they plan to use the local educational television station to provide in-service training for this staff. In Vancouver, British Columbia, one of the most successful ABE programs,sponsored by Vancouver Community College,was situated in a storefront property in an older, run-down section of the city. This program, designed for new and older immigrants, offered them the opportunity to learn in the security of their own neighborhood with their friends and families. Recently, I questioned students enrolled at the Harvey Center at Thornton Community College and found, again, that the pervasive sense of security was a major factor in alleviating the anxieties associated both with previous failures in their school years and with the new experience of learning as adults.

With respect to community resources, there is an urgent need for the outreach centers to interface with such agencies as libraries and learning centers. Libraries could be encouraged to organize reading sections for the ABE learner, similar to one at the Cleveland Public Library, and to sponsor the showing of educational television programs like the Kentucky G.E.D. Project Update and the University of Wisconsin's American Pie Forum, which focuses on career education. Those videotapes could be shown over a local cable station, and the library could provide viewing space for the ABE and GED students in the community. As for learning centers, these have directed their efforts largely toward meeting the needs of middle-class individuals or groups. The centers could also serve the needs of the culturally different groups by making available computer printouts of particular services that would benefit those groups; for example, consumer information, tax guides, etc. The reason for this recommendation is simply that culturally different groups have very few ways in which to obtain such help.

There is, likewise, an urgent need for the outreach centers to interface with their own central campus. The important areas are the initial counselling of students and follow-up counselling, to give them direction and encouragement, and orientation sessions having to do with career education. It is certainly as necessary to provide auxiliary services to this clientele as to the regular students on the central campus.

In closing, this presentation has constituted nothing less than a plea to grant to culturally different groups -- one of the most neglected segments of our society -- the same opportunities that we offer to other, more fortunate individuals and groups. I don't doubt that there is a wealth of talent longing to express itself and lacking only the channels which it is, in my opinion, our duty to provide. Earlier in my talk, I referred to one of the most significant studies that has been done on ABE in the United States -- Mezirow, Darkenwald, and Knox's Last Gamble on Education. The gambling metaphor which they have used refers to the tremendous odds which face culturally different adults in their struggles for a better life. What are we doing to lessen those odds?

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